Ask Me Later (You Know the Answer)

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Ask Me Later (You Know the Answer)

by Thoughtsfullofbooks

Summary

Even before they met, Hannibal Lecter knew he was destined to marry Will Graham. Once they finally did meet, Hannibal never stopped asking Will.

Or,

A progression of Hannibal and Will's time in high school shown through moments where Hannibal asks Will to marry him.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Before they had even met, Hannibal knew he was going to marry the blue-eyed boy that sat across and one seat up from him in ninth grade math. He had spotted him during orientation for a brief moment a week prior and had immediately fell in love.

The other boy's bored expression as his perfect blue eyes roamed across the sea of students collecting schedules and dropping off school supplies for teachers captivated Hannibal. His perfect halo of unruly brown curls sat atop what Hannibal later learned to be the most beautiful mind he had ever encountered entranced him to the point of running into his aunt as she abruptly stopped and conversed with one of Hannibal's teachers in the hall.

She had scolded him, later in the car, about getting distracted at this new school by pretty boys. The on-going lecture of focusing on his studies so his journey to medical school would go smoothly flowed in one ear and out the other as Hannibal picked out a beautiful blue sapphire encrusted ring in his mind palace to one day present the boy.

To Hannibal's utter elation, the two shared three classes that year. Their last names were fairly close together in the alphabet so Hannibal always had a perfect view of his classmate when he chose to admire him.

Will Graham. That was his name. Will. Graham.

Hannibal repeated the name in his head at every waking moment. Through every class they had together, every class they didn't have together, when he saw him passing through the hallways, and when he arrived back home, locking himself in his room and sketching that beautiful mess of curls and those perfect blue eyes over and over again.

The chance to finally meet Will Graham and speak to him alone came two weeks after school started. Hannibal stopped by the library to return a book on pre-Renaissance Florence when he noticed Will sitting at a table near the back wall. His pencil was chewed to hell, a hand was buried in his curls as he tugged on them in frustration, and the math homework assigned for today sat unfinished on the table in front of him. Straightening his back, Hannibal took this as the opportunity it was and slowly approached Will's table.

"Hello," Hannibal started. "May I sit with you?"

Will jerked his head up and made sudden eye contact with Hannibal. The latter's breath caught in his throat as his soul was pierced through by those stunning blue eyes. Will quickly broke the contact as soon as it started, his eyes flitted over the expanse of Hannibal's face before settling on the bridge of his nose. He exhaled sharply.

"I'm kind of busy," Will grumbled. Hannibal noticed it wasn't a rejection.

"Yes. I came to offer my assistance. I couldn't help but notice you haven't finished the homework for today yet." Hannibal motioned toward the offending paper. Will looked at it in disgust. "I would be happy to help, seeing as we are in the same class and learning the same material."

Will sighed in defeat as he glanced at the clock on the wall. Class started in less than an hour and he was nowhere close to finishing. He nodded at the chair next to him and Hannibal happily sat.

“Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Hannibal Lecter.” Hannibal extended a hand for Will to shake.

Will scoffed but took the offered hand. “I know who you are. We have like four classes together.”

Hannibal smiled. “Just three classes, unfortunately. But I am pleased to have made an impression.”

“Yeah, well, you’re like the smartest person at this school. You’re hard to forget when all the teachers gush about you on their breaks.”

“Are you often privy to the gossip of the administration, Will?” The brunet’s slight southern drawl was sending Hannibal into a frenzy as he memorized every word that came out of his mouth. This was more than he had ever heard Will say and he cataloged every sentence into a thick volume in his mind palace’s library.

The tips of Will’s ears turned a slight pink. He fiddled with his pencil against the table, etching random patterns into the worn wood surface. “I’m in here a lot during free period and lunch. The teacher’s break room is in here. They leave the door open sometimes.”

“I see.” Hannibal took a minute to admire the boy sitting next to him. He had released his hair while talking and it now stood up at wild angles that gave Hannibal unlimited inspiration for his next hundred sketchbooks; long black eyelashes obscured his beautiful eyes and rested on plump cheeks; Will’s tongue poked out from his mouth and ran delicately over a bottom lip Hannibal longed to take into his own mouth.

“So, the math homewo–” Will was cut off abruptly.

“Marry me.” All of Hannibal’s decorum flew out the window in an instant. If his aunt was sitting next to him she would have tsked in that disappointed tone of voice he hated as she scolded him for his lack of completed sentences. It wasn’t what he meant to say, but Hannibal was at least glad he managed to ask in English and not the other four languages swirling around in his head.

To Will’s credit, he only looked slightly taken aback. “What?”

No way to back out now. “Will you marry me?” It was the most decisive Hannibal had ever been in his life. He wanted this boy, felt it in his soul they were meant to be together, in this lifetime, in every lifetime. Hannibal held onto the small shred of hope he felt when Will didn’t outright deny him.

Will laughed nervously. “Are you serious?”

“Deadly.”

“We’re only 14 years old.”

“So?”

“We don’t know anything about each other.”

“That’s what the rest of our lives is for.”

Will smiled, a real genuine smile that set Hannibal’s heart on fire, and slowly shook his head. “Why don’t you ask me later, Romeo? You promised to help with this math homework and I need to know if you’re good at keeping promises before we exchange vows.”

Hannibal nodded in a trance, eyes fixed on his paramore. He didn’t say no. Will didn’t say no. He willed his hands to remain steady as they scooted their chairs closer together, heads bent over the paper shared between them.

* * * *

Hannibal asked Will to marry him for the second time the day after they started dating.

The two lay curled up together on Hannibal’s bed in his massive room after school. Hannibal had been trailing lazy kisses up the expanse of Will’s slender neck for the better part of an hour while the latter read from a book on forensic sciences, his hand combing through Hannibal’s hair and doing nothing to dissuade his boyfriend’s exploration. A sharp nip on Will’s pulse point caused him to suck in a breath. He tugged slightly on Hannibal’s hair in retaliation.

“Ow,” Will said, not really meaning it.

“I’m sorry, my darling,” Hannibal replied, not really meaning it. Will could hear the smile in his voice as he pressed an apologetic kiss to the area he bit.

Setting his book down on the bed, Will tugged on Hannibal’s hair until their lips met properly. They kissed slow and long, taking time to map both the inside and outside of each other’s mouths with tongue and teeth until they had to come up for air. Will nibbled on Hannibal’s lower lip as they shared breaths.

A hand ran under Will’s shirt and he arched into the touch as a cool hand rested on his lower back. Suddenly chest to chest with Hannibal, Will brought him in for another kiss. This one was more bruising than the last, lips crashing into each other as Will wrapped a hand around Hannibal’s neck in an effort to eliminate any remaining space between them. Blunt nails scratched down Will’s back and he gasped into the kiss at the sensation.

A deep growl sounded at the back of Hannibal’s throat. He grabbed Will’s hips in a way that was sure to leave bruises behind tomorrow and ground their bodies together. Will broke the kiss, throwing his head back against the pillows with a groan.

Hannibal quickly worked at removing Will’s button up shirt–which was actually Hannibal’s he was borrowing for the day–and kissed his exposed skin the first chance he got.

“Bellissimo, magnifique, visiškai kvapą gniaužiantis,” Hannibal praised. “My beautiful Will. Will you marry me?”

Will froze at the top of the bed. Hannibal did not, continuing his assault on Will’s chest and stomach as if he had said nothing at all.

“Hannibal.”

Hannibal hummed in answer and spoke near Will’s hip bone. “Yes, my beloved?”

“Did you just ask me to marry you?”

“Yes.”

“Again?”

“Yes.”

“Did you mean it?”

Hannibal’s eyes shot up to Will’s. They held eye contact as Hannibal made his way up his boyfriend’s body, hand trailing over his sides as he went. “Of course I meant it. I meant it three months ago when we first met and I will mean it every time I ask until you say yes.”

Will’s eyes filled with unexpected emotion. He quickly blinked his eyes so as to not let tears fall; he was seriously considering Hannibal’s offer even though he knew it was a stupid thing to do. They were too young, they were still in school, they’ve only been dating for two days! But Will wanted to say yes so badly it hurt.

Hannibal kissed Will’s cheeks at his silence. “It’s okay, darling. You don’t have to say anything; I know it’s a lot.”

“I want to,” Will whispered. “I do. But I don’t want to ruin what we have. I don’t want you getting shackled to me and realizing I’m not the marrying type. I don’t want to lose you.”

Hannibal shushed Will lightly and pressed a feather-light kiss to his lips. “My dear Will, you could never ruin what we have. And I’m afraid to say but you’ll never get rid of me, not now; I’m in this for the long haul, you see. I’m very patient and willing to wait for however long you need.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

“You can ask me later.” Will smiled a small smile. “I might have a better answer for you then.”

“I’ll ask everyday, if you want me to.”

Will screwed his face up. “Well, maybe not everyday.” He dissolved into a fit of laughter as Hannibal attacked his neck yet again with incessant kissing. His hand found the other boy’s hair once more and paid no mind to his book sliding off the bed.

* * * *

It had been over a year since Hannibal had last asked Will to marry him. Nearly their entire tenth grade year went by without a sudden proposal and Will had almost forgotten about it all together.

That was until Hannibal cornered him at his locker during a class change on the last day of school and presented him with a small velvet box wrapped with a blue ribbon. Will’s smile fell from his lips as he stared at the box. Beverly gasped beside him at her own locker.

She leaned over Will’s shoulder to get a better view of the box. “Is that what I think it is?” She all but squealed. In the year that they had been friends, Will had neglected to mention his boyfriend’s sudden proposals at the most inopportune times.

“Could you give us a minute, Bev?” Will croaked out.

He wasn’t sure if they were alone by the time he took Hannibal’s box from him. Will carefully unwrapped the bow and cracked open the box. Inside was the most beautiful silver band Will had ever seen. It was simple, except for the expensive looking blue rock embedded into the band, but it sparkled even in the harsh phosphorescent school lights; Will traced a finger over the object and knew it would fit him perfectly just by looking at it.

“I know what you’re thinking,” Hannibal began softly. “But it is only a promise ring. I assure you the real thing will be much grander.”

Will stared up at Hannibal with love-filled eyes. “I love it.”

“I figured this was a better gesture than asking you everyday to marry me. If we are not ready yet, then this will serve as a reminder of my love for you and my promise to always be there when you need me.” Hannibal’s eyes suddenly darkened as they roamed over Will’s body. “It also shows everyone at this school who you belong to, who you are destined to be with, ‘til death do us part.”

Will laughed softly. “Will you put it on me?”

“Of course.” Hannibal took the ring from the box in one hand and clasped Will’s hand in the other.

“You know, even after you explained it was only a promise ring, I half-expected you to ask me anyway.”

The ring slid onto Will’s finger perfectly, just as he predicted. Hannibal leaned down and pressed a kiss to the ring.

“Will you marry me, Will?” He asked sweetly.

Will cupped Hannibal's cheek with the hand his ring was on. He swept a thumb over the other boy's sharp cheekbone, admiring how the ring looked against pale skin. "Ask me later."

Hannibal's grin was all teeth as he pulled their mouths together amidst the milling crowd of teenagers around them.

* * * *

Hannibal asked Will to marry him on four separate occasions during their junior year of high school. Once on the first day of school; Hannibal drove the both of them to school and asked in the parking lot once they arrived. Another when the two were studying for mid-year exams; Will got a B+ on the practice test and smiled so brightly Hannibal thought he was looking at the sun. A third time when Will's shoelace became undone and Hannibal knelt to tie it for him; Will carded his fingers through the other boy's hair and offhandedly mentioned that he had never been asked in the traditional sense, Hannibal wasted no time in asking. The fourth time was on Hannibal's birthday; he claimed that since they were now both 17 it would be simple to have everything ready for their wedding in a year's time and they could wed as soon as they turned 18.

Will had requested he ask him later every time. The ring on his finger never came off and Hannibal was never discouraged.

The fifth time Will was asked, Will was the one to initiate the conversation. He texted Hannibal a location late one night with a simple "if you're up" text to follow. Hannibal was always up for Will, no matter the time.

He snuck out through the same window Will had snuck in through a dozen times in the past and met him in a park not far from school. Will was sat on the swing set, kicking his feet in the mulch below to create deep divots, when Hannibal pulled up. Immediately, he knew something was wrong.

Will greeted him as he approached with a smile that didn't quite reach his eyes. They embraced with a hug too tight for two people that saw each other less than eight hours ago. Hannibal took Will's hands and noticed at once his ring was gone.

"I still have it, don't worry," Will quickly said. He pulled a chain around his neck from under his shirt and the ring flopped onto his chest.

"Why aren't you wearing it, my love?" Hannibal carefully asked. Will never took the ring off, not during baseball, not when he slept, not ever.

"My dad suddenly decided it was a great time to get invested in my life, not that he ever cared before now," Will ground out. "He noticed the ring. Started asking questions about it. Then started making comments about it. Ya know, how much did it cost? How much could we get for it now since you've been wearing it? Where I've been hiding all my rich friends who buy me things while we're struggling at home." Will's hands tightened around Hannibal's as he forced himself to remain calm.

The latter remained silent as Will recounted his story. He had an uneasy feeling in his stomach as Will continued.

“He tried to take it, eventually. When my answers weren’t good enough and I refused to sell it. Almost broke my finger trying to get the thing off of me, claimed he was just getting a better look at it.”

Hannibal’s eyes burned a cold fury at Will’s words. He lightly stroked Will’s finger, counting each joint and cataloging each muscle as he went, checking for breaks or dislocations at every point. His face remained impassive as he asked his question, his person suit cracking slightly. “Did he hurt you?”

“No,” Will mumbled. “No, I got away and jumped out the window in my room. He probably broke through the door by now trying to get me; but he didn’t touch me other than that.”

“Good.” Hannibal brought Will into a tight hug.

“I’m sorry,” Will suddenly choked out, voice full of emotion. He shook slightly in Hannibal’s embrace, hands fisted in the other boy’s shirt. “I can normally handle him; I don’t know what happened tonight.”

“You have nothing to be sorry for, Will. This is not your fault.”

“I love you.” It wasn’t the first time those words have been exchanged between the two, but when Will said it this time it felt like the first time all over again. Love punched through his heart and filled his throat. Will choked on it and pulled Hannibal impossibly closer.

“I love you too, mylimasis. There is nothing in this world I would not do for you.” The promise held the hint of a threat, cleverly hidden and impossible to see to the average onlooker, but Will understood it. He always understood Hannibal.

“Would you marry me? Take me away from this place. From him.”

“Yes,” Hannibal said immediately.

“Say it. Ask me.”

“Will you marry me, Will Graham?” Hannibal unclasped the chain from around Will’s neck and slid the ring back onto his finger.

Will crushed their lips together. A life full of love and promise poured between the two as their future played rapidly behind both their eyes in a split second. Will fisted his hands in Hannibal’s jacket and the ring clinked off the metal zipper. Hannibal thread his hand in Will’s curls and held him in place through the kiss.

“Ask me later,” Will breathed out when he broke the kiss. “Please ask me later.”

“I promise.”

* * * *

Hannibal asked Will to marry him when he was accepted into the top forensic science and criminology school on the east coast. Will was so happy he almost said yes. But, he still asked Hannibal to ask him later.

Hannibal asked again when he was accepted into his first choice medical university only a stone's throw away from Will's campus. Will once again told him to ask him later. But Hannibal noticed right away that Will hesitated more than he ever had before.

Their graduation snuck up on them before either one had noticed. Final exams were done and over with, baseball season ended with Will bringing the team to a stunning victory in the championship, and Hannibal's piece about the game in the school's newspaper was even featured in their city's newspaper. It was time for them to leave high school; but Hannibal hadn't completed all his goals yet.

Will was currently surrounded by his baseball teammates near the stage at the front of the football field. The graduation ceremony finished nearly 45 minutes ago yet almost every student still milled around with their peers. Hannibal stood just a ways away, just having finished a conversation of his own, and unabashedly stared at Will in his graduation gown and cap. He really must send a thank you letter to whoever picked the color of the robes this year; they were a stunning blue that matched both Will's eyes and the ring that sat proudly on his finger. The approach of three sets of footsteps sounded behind him, but Hannibal didn't turn.

"Congrats, Hannibal!" Beverly said next to him.

"Thank you. Congratulations to the three of you, as well." Hannibal nodded towards Bev, Jimmy, and Brian in succession, finally tearing his eyes away from Will.

"So, you finally put a ring on that or what?" Beverly cut straight to the chase. She motioned toward Will with her chin while Brian choked next to her.

"What? Are you talking about marriage?" Brian all but shouted.

"Obviously!" Bev retorted.

"Did you think Will wears that ring for show?" Jimmy added. "They're practically engaged already."

"You knew about this too?" Brian shot in Jimmy's direction. The latter shrugged.

"I put it together mostly through context clues. They are pretty intense when it comes to their relationship. No offense," Jimmy added toward Hannibal.

"None taken," Hannibal easily replied. "In fact," he produced a sleek black ring box from the pocket of his gown. The three gaped at the sudden addition. "Beverly is entirely right."

"I knew it!" Bev pumped her fist in the air. "Well, what are you waiting for? Do you have a big set up at home or are you gonna ask him all casual-like and try and catch him off guard?"

“Will is well aware of my future plans regarding the two of us. I don’t think I have the element of surprise on my side.”

“You never know. It is a pretty unexpected place to propose,” Jimmy reasoned.

Hannibal thought about it for a moment, weighing the options in his head. He hadn’t planned anything grand at home. There was a homemade dinner waiting to be cooked after they left here. Hannibal had booked them a small summer vacation in Europe before college started and planned to present the tickets to Will that night. It would be quiet and simple and perfect.

It was also several hours from now.

Hannibal made up his mind and left the group without saying goodbye. He barely registered a whistle Beverly sent in his direction as he made his way across the small distance that separated the two of them.

He took Will’s hand upon meeting him and kissed the back of it. “May I steal you away for a moment?”

Will nodded immediately. He gave half a wave to his teammates and left with Hannibal. They stopped at the corner of the stage, tuning out the background noise of parents yelling for pictures and the football players trying to tackle one another one last time in the soft grass.

Hannibal took Will’s hand in his and looked deeply into his eyes. “I love you, Will Graham.”

“And I love you, Hannibal Lecter.”

“I have loved you since the moment I first laid eyes on you four years ago in a cramped hallway before the first day of school. I have loved you since the first day we properly met in the library and I helped you with your math homework. And I have loved you everyday between now and then. You have accepted every part of myself without question, you have loved me unconditionally and without abandon, and I want to spend the rest of my life showing you that you will never be alone. For as long as I live, I will love you with my whole being, with my whole soul. We will be equals in everything. Nothing will stand between us. We will be together always.”

Will’s breath hitched in his throat. “What are you saying?”

Hannibal smiled wide. He dropped down to one knee and held the box open in front of him. “Will Graham, will you marry me?”

“For real this time?” Tears filled Will’s eyes as the reality of the moment came crashing down on him.

“For real this time.”

Will didn’t have to think about his answer. It never changed, not from the first time Hannibal had asked and not every time in between. “Yes! Yes, of course. Yes!”

Hannibal stood, replaced Will's promise ring with the real thing, and swept him into a breathtaking kiss. It lasted far too short. Both were already slightly out of breath from the talking that preceded the proposal and the emotions that occurred during. But that didn't stop them from kissing again when they caught their breath. Or again, or again. They didn't even stop when surprised shouts and applause came from their watching classmates behind them.

They only ceased when Beverly came barreling into Will to smother him in a hug. "AHH! Congratulations! I get to be the Best Maid, right?"

"Well, obviously," Will said.

Next to them, Brian handed Jimmy ten bucks and clapped Hannibal on the shoulder. "The first of us to get married. How does it feel?"

"It feels like I've been preparing for this moment since we first met."

Hannibal and Will locked eyes, their smiles mirror images of one another.

End Notes

Hello, all!

I hope you all enjoyed this cute little fic. I know this may seem like the end of this series but I promise it is not! It is merely a fast forward to what their relationship ends up to be.

Translations:
Bellissimo: beautiful (Italian)
Magnifique: gorgeous (French)
Visiškai kvapą gniaužiantis: absolutely breathtaking (Lithuanian)
Mylimasis: beloved (Lithuanian)

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